

Strategic Goal 1

Restore the capability of disabled veterans to the greatest extent possible and improve their quality of life and that of their families

Objective 1.1

Maximize the physical, mental, and social functioning of disabled veterans and special populations of veterans by assessing their needs and coordinating the delivery of health care, benefits, and services

Objective 1.2

Improve the quality of life and economic status of service-disabled veterans, and recognize their contributions and sacrifices made in defense of the Nation



Objective 1.3

Enable service-disabled veterans to become employable, and obtain and maintain suitable employment

Objective 1.4

Ensure survivors of service-disabled veterans are able to maintain a minimum standard of living and income through compensation and education benefits

To restore the capability of disabled veterans...

VA will achieve this goal of restoring the capability of disabled veterans by maximizing the ability of disabled veterans, special veteran populations, and their dependents and survivors to become full and productive members of society through a system of health care, compensation, vocational rehabilitation, life insurance, dependency and indemnity compensation, and dependents and survivors education. This system of benefits and services is aimed toward the broad outcome of restoration of the individual capabilities of our Nation's disabled veterans.

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Purpose and Outcomes:

The purpose of this objective is to explore all possibilities for maximizing the functional status of disabled veterans. This includes VA's coordination of health care and other benefits in a manner that enhances the likelihood of restoration of an individual veteran to wholeness. For example, a veteran who suffers from a spinal cord injury should be able to expect that VA will be focusing on the individual needs of that veteran in the near-term, but that VA will also be focusing on the coordination of all benefits, including research related to spinal cord injuries and other rehabilitation benefits, that will have the highest likelihood of restoring the capabilities of that particular veteran.

Strategies and Processes:

Providing for the specialized health needs of veterans is an integral component of VA healthcare. Due to the prevalence of certain chronic and disabling conditions among veterans, VA has developed strong expertise in certain specialized services. VA programs and services for spinal cord injury and disorders, blindness, traumatic brain injury, amputation, serious mental illness, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other disabling conditions are not uniformly available in the private sector. VA is committed to meeting the care needs of these veterans who have come to rely on us for specialized services.

VA treats an increasingly aged population, and functional status tends to decrease as a person ages and as their disability worsens. VA needs to

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take this aging process into account as it implements this objective. Minimizing the decrease in functioning, or attaining the highest level possible, as opposed to removing the pathological condition, is an important domain of medical treatment. VA's strategy is to focus on improving functioning and enhancing rehabilitation of veterans with special needs such as Blind

Rehabilitation, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Spinal Cord Injury, Seriously Mentally Ill, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Amputation, as required by Public Law 104-262, the Veterans Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996.

VA is collecting data to establish a baseline. Further data collection in subsequent years will rely on several widely accepted quantitative measures to assess improvement in physical, mental and social functioning of special populations of veterans as part of the *restoration of capabilities* goal. To achieve this objective, VA will apply several enabling information technologies including the following systems:

- the **Computerized Patient Record (CPRS)**, will organize and present all relevant patient data in a way that directly supports clinical decision-making. It is VA's version of the electronic patient record; and
- the **Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology (VISTA)** – which is VHA's main health care information system. It encompasses the Decentralized Hospital Computer Program (DHCP), as well as the complete information environment at VA medical facilities.

- VA has a vast number of sharing agreements with the DoD that result in both increased access to, and quality of, medical care for veterans. Many of these collaborative partnerships result in increased levels of care for many of VA's most important subgroups of patients, including veterans with spinal cord injury, acute traumatic brain injury, Gulf

War illnesses, and those in need of prosthetic services.

External Factors:

- Improvements in the overall health of special populations will be affected, in part, by constituencies who influence these programs as well as by other government agencies and private interest groups.

	Objective 1.1 Performance Measure (Outcomes)	FY 2005 Performance Targets
Blind Rehabilitation ó	Proportion of blind patients whose functioning improves.	TBD
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder ó	Percent of veterans currently enrolled in the National PTSD Outcomes Monitoring System who were successfully followed-up by the fourth month after discharge (51% in 1999).	58%
Spinal Cord Injury ó	Percent of discharges from Spinal Cord Injury center bed sections to non-institutional settings.	95%
Seriously Mentally Ill ó	Percentage of seriously mentally ill patients whose functioning improves.	TBD
Traumatic Brain Injury ó	Percent of serious acute and subacute traumatic brain injury (TBI) patients whose functioning improves.	TBD
Preservation of Amputation Care and Treatment ó	Percentage of PACT patients whose functioning improves.	TBD
Addiction and Severity Index (ASI) ó	Increase the percentage of patients seen in substance abuse settings who have an initial ASI score and a six month follow-up.	75%
Homeless ó	Increase the percentage of veterans who acquired independent living arrangements at discharge from a Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans program or a community-based contractual residential care program.	56%

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Purpose and Outcomes:

The proposed outcomes¹ of the VA Compensation Program are to:

- Recognize the impact of disability on a veterans' loss of quality of life and support pursuit of maximum individual potential;
- Improve the security of disabled veterans by making payments that offset the average loss of earning capacity resulting from service-connected disability or disease²;
- Ensure service members and veterans understand and have easy access to all benefits for which they are eligible based on service-connected disability or disease; and
- Ensure service members and veterans are confident that VA will properly compensate them for service-related disability.

These proposed outcomes are partially achieved through the timely and accurate processing of compensation claims and the provision of monthly payments and ancillary benefits to veterans in accordance with rates specified by law. These rates are based on the recognition of the average potential loss of earning capacity caused by disability or disease or injuries incurred in or aggravated during active military service. VA provides over \$22 billion in compensation payments to service-disabled veterans annually, and in the future, these payments must reflect the changing nature of the veteran population.

1. These proposed outcomes are subject to change based upon ongoing stakeholder consultations being conducted by VBA.

2. The monthly rate of benefits and degree of disability for monthly compensation benefits are specified by statute.

*Objective 1.2
Improve the quality of life and economic status of service-disabled veterans, and recognize their contributions and sacrifices made in defense of the Nation*

Strategies and Processes:

VA will implement the following strategies to improve the quality of life and economic status of service-disabled veterans and provide world-class service to disabled veterans:

- VA will provide veterans with easy access to information and the opportunity to obtain benefits and services at a convenient time and place.
- VA will simplify the administrative rules and regulations governing the application and eligibility determination process.
- VA will maximize direct contact with the veteran through the *case management* approach and through the use of information technology and improved workforce skills. This effort will result in improved veteran-customer satisfaction, improved cycle time for claims processing, and improved accuracy.
- VA will enhance partnerships with DoD and other organizations to improve outreach to disabled veterans and improve coordination of disability examinations, thereby enhancing the eligibility determination process.
- VA will ensure that all Transition Assistance Program (TAP) presentations, jointly sponsored by VA, DoD, and DoL, include information and assistance for separating women servicemembers. VA will assess the quality of information provided to men and women leaving the active military and ensure that program content includes relevant VA health care and benefit program information and assistance for both men and women departing military service.

- Conduct an independent program evaluation of the Compensation Program to determine if the economic needs of veterans in the program are met.
- Identify outcome indicators for the Compensation Program and determine baseline measures through program evaluation and a consultative process with stakeholders.
- Workforce and Technology — The compensation claims process has become more complex and time consuming. VA anticipates a significant number of highly experienced decision-makers retiring in the near future. We will require sufficient investments in human capital and technology to successfully achieve service delivery outcomes.
- Enhanced Partnerships — Our ability to effectively partner with other agencies will affect achievement of program outcomes.

External Factors:

- Legislation — Legislation may be required to achieve anticipated program outcomes.

Objective 1.2 Performance Measure (Outcomes) ³		FY 2005 Performance Targets
Compensation 6	Percentage of compensation recipients who perceive that VA compensation recognizes the contribution and sacrifices made by veterans during military service	TBD
	Percentage of compensation recipients who perceive that VA compensation redresses the effect of service-connected disability in diminishing the quality of life	TBD
	Percentage of veterans in receipt of compensation whose total income exceeds that of like-circumstanced non-veterans	TBD
	Percentage of veterans who believe that disability compensation and related VA benefits provide the resources they need to help them pursue their maximum potential	TBD
	Percentage of veterans for whom quality of life indicators for disabled veterans are equal to or higher than those for similarly disabled non-veterans	TBD
Service Delivery Measures		FY 2005 Performance Targets
Speed 6	Rating related actions (completed) (# of days)	74
	Non-rating related actions (completed) (# of days)	17
Accuracy 6	National accuracy rate (core rating work)	96%
Customer Satisfaction 6	Overall satisfaction	90%
Decision Rate 6	Increase the long term, deficiency-free decision rate for appeal claims ³	95%
Speed 6	Appeals resolution average (days/case) ⁴	365
C&P 6	Blocked Call	7%
	Abandoned Call	5%

3. These outcome measures are all subject to ongoing stakeholders consultations being conducted by VBA and are likely to be modified based on the results of these discussions

4. Appeals resolution average (days/case) is a joint performance measure with VBA and the Board of Veterans Appeals Measures (BVA).

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Purpose and Outcomes:

The purpose and outcomes of the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program are to:

- Enable service-connected disabled veterans to become employable and obtain and maintain suitable employment;
- Enable service-connected disabled veterans to achieve a maximum level of independence in daily living; and
- Meet the rehabilitation needs of service connected disabled veterans.

When the severity of disability prohibits suitable employment, VA assists those veterans to achieve maximum independence in daily living activities.

Strategies and Processes:

VA will implement the following strategies to assist service-disabled veterans to become employable, achieve maximum independence in daily living, and receive world-class service delivery:

- VA will provide veterans with easy access to information and the opportunity to obtain benefits and services at a convenient time and place.
- VA will simplify the administrative rules and regulations governing the application and eligibility determination process.
- VA will maximize direct contact with the veteran through the case management approach and through the use of information technology and improved workforce skills. This effort will result in improved veteran-customer satisfaction, improved cycle time for claims processing, and improved accuracy.

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- VA will build or enhance partnerships with DoL and other organizations to improve the coordination of employment services. VA will enhance outreach to disabled veterans through alliances with other federal agencies.
- VA will identify performance measures for the program and determine baseline measures through program evaluations, program reviews, a consultative process with stakeholders and other means.

External Factors:

- Legislation — Legislation may be required to achieve anticipated program outcomes.
- Economic Conditions — Program participation and successful attainment of rehabilitation goals are closely related to the economy and the employment market.

Objective 1.3 Performance Measure (Outcomes)		FY 2005 Performance Targets
Employment 6	Percent of veterans exiting the program who obtain and maintain suitable employment	70%
Independent Living 6	Percentage of independent living veterans obtaining a level of independence in daily living	TBD
Service Delivery Measures		FY 2005 Performance Targets
Customer Satisfaction 6	Satisfaction with VA service	92%
Speed 6	Days to complete entitlement determination	60
Accuracy 6	Entitlement determination accuracy	96%

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Purpose and Outcomes:

The purpose of the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) program is to provide monthly payments, as specified by law⁵, to surviving spouses, dependent children and dependent parents in recognition of the economic loss caused by the veteran's death during active military service or subsequent discharge from military service, as a result of a service-connected disability. The outcomes for these monetary payments are to:

- Recognize and compensate the surviving spouses of veterans whose deaths are determined to be service-connected;
- Ensure a minimum standard of living and an acceptable level of income for surviving spouses in receipt of DIC; and
- Provide a level of income that brings surviving parents up to a standard of living that ensures a basic dignity in their lives.

Objective 1.4
Ensure survivors of service-disabled veterans are able to maintain a minimum standard of living and income through compensation and education benefits

Strategies and Processes:

VA will implement the following strategies to ensure survivors of service-disabled veterans are able to maintain a minimum standard of living and receive world-class service:

- VA will identify performance measures for the DIC Program and determine baseline measures through program evaluations, program reviews, a consultative process with

stakeholders and other means to determine results of the DIC Program.

- VA will use customer and business data to determine the needs and expectations for both the DIC program outcomes and for service delivery expectations. This will enhance the measurement of program outcomes and service delivery performance.

External Factors:

- Legislation — Legislation may be required to achieve anticipated program outcomes.

Objective 1.4 Performance Measure (Outcomes)		FY 2005 Performance Targets
Standard of Living 6	Ensure a minimum standard of living and an acceptable level of income for surviving spouses in receipt of DIC	TBD
Level of Income 6	Provide a level of income that brings surviving parents up to a standard of living that insures basic dignity in their lives	TBD
Compensation 6	Recognize and compensate the surviving spouse of veterans whose deaths are determined to be service-connected	TBD
Service Delivery Measures (See Objective 1.2)		

Service delivery performance measures (speed, accuracy and customer satisfaction) are measured for the entire Compensation, DIC and Pension Programs. These measures are aggregate measures and not separated by individual program. Therefore, the measures for the service delivery targets for the DIC Program (Objective 1.4) are identical to the measures for the Compensation Program (Objective 1.2).

5. The monthly rate of benefits and degree of disability for monthly DIC benefits are specified by statute.